

**AFM 1-2**

A I R F O R C E M A N U A L

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AIR DOCTRINE

# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASIC DOCTRINE

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1 APRIL 1955

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D E P A R T M E N T O F T H E A I R F O R C E



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Foreword

The United States Air Force has been established as the primary air arm of the United States. This Manual presents the basic doctrine of the United States Air Force for employing the Nation's air forces during all forms of international conflict. It provides the ultimate reference authority for this employment and thus serves as a basis for all other Air Force Manuals dealing with the employment of air forces. These other Manuals present doctrine that is detailed to degrees appropriate to the levels at which they are directed.

Basic doctrine evolves from experience and from analysis of the continuing impact of new developments.

Doctrine thus evolved must be applied in the light of strengths and weaknesses of allies, neutrals, and potential enemies. The application of this doctrine to the roles and missions of the United States Air Force will promote the effective employment of air power.

The term United States Air Force, as used in this Manual, includes the Regular Air Force and the Reserve Forces of the United States Air Force, which are composed of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves.

By Order of the Secretary of the Air Force:

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Colonel, USAF  
Air Adjutant General

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## Section A

# INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND THE INSTRUMENTS OF NATIONAL POLICY

### **All nations have continuing national objectives.**

In striving to attain their objectives, nations evolve policies which become the guiding principles for their actions. Their military policies derive from and support their national objectives. The national objectives generally include economic well being, political stability, social and industrial progress, and security from encroachment or attack by another nation.

### **There is continuous conflict between nations.**

As nations endeavor to gain their objectives they come into conflict with other nations. This conflict is continuous as each nation seeks to further its interests by applying its instruments of policy.

### **Conflict does not always lead to war.**

The nature of conflict varies greatly. It may range all the way from a routine exchange of diplomatic notes conducted in a friendly atmosphere of peace to armed hostilities conducted in a major war. Between these two extremes a nation may be involved in international tension in many forms—including limited wars—and possibly for long periods.

### **Conflicts are resolved in different ways.**

Because differences generally exist in some form, nations must try continually to resolve conflict, or to gain advantageous position. And because the conflicts are not always the same, the actions that are involved in these efforts alter with the changing circumstances. But whatever the nature of conflict, any element of a nation's power, or all elements, may be used, as required, to gain its desired ends through courses of action which are consistent with its national policies.

### **The elements of a nation's power fall into four categories.**

The groupings of power elements that comprise the instruments of national policy are: *The psycho-social instrument*—which includes the moral strength of a nation as manifested in its internal stability, unity, national will, and ability to influence other nations.

*The political instrument*—which includes a nation's system for internal direction and control, and its governmental organization for dealing with other nations.

*The economic instrument*—which includes the industrial, technological, commercial, and fiscal structure of a nation.

*The military instrument*—which includes the total military capacity of a nation.

### **In any specific phase of conflict a nation employs its instruments of power to gain the results which it considers to be the most acceptable.**

The extent to which a nation applies its instruments of power and the manner in which it applies them is determined by the following considerations: (1) its objectives and policies; (2) the status of the specific nation or nations involved—that is, the object nations; (3) the objectives and policies of those nations; (4) the attitude of the international community; (5) the urgency of the circumstances.

In pursuing its objectives a nation may be confronted with the risk of war. In such instances, the nation concerned must either accept that risk or modify its objective.

To appraise these risks accurately, those who are party to the necessary decisions must have the benefit of current and valid information about the other nation or nations which are involved. When this information is not available, the possibility of gross mistakes and miscalculations is dangerously high.



## Section B

# THE MILITARY INSTRUMENT OF NATIONAL POLICY

### **The military instrument of the United States is employed for the fundamental purpose of advancing the nation toward its objectives.**

Therefore, the military strategy of the United States always should be integrated with the Government's other courses of action. The forces which comprise the military instrument of policy must be appraised collectively and individually on the basis of their relation to the whole pattern of national aspirations.

### **Factors other than destruction or the physical domination of an adversary also must be considered in measuring the success of military operations.**

In any type of conflict the paramount purpose for employing the military instrument of policy will be ultimately to bring about a desired condition. In this sense victory in a military operation is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. The ultimate objective always must reach beyond the victory itself to the securing of a desired condition resulting from the victory. Therefore, success can be measured only by the attainment of specific military objectives which support the national policy. There are five fundamental effects which each military force of a nation is able to produce upon another nation in varying degrees—depending upon the inherent capabilities of the force in question, the medium in which it operates (land, sea or air), and how and when it is used. The five effects are: persuasion, neutralization, denial, destruction, and capture.

Destruction and domination might or might not be specified military objectives. In fact, such an objective might call for military operations in which destruction and physical domi-

nation of an opponent through capture and occupation of territory are expressly excluded. In some instances—even during wartime operations—circumstances could occur in which these two undertakings would be irrelevant in the establishment of the desired conditions, and other effects upon an adversary would be more advantageous.

### **The military forces of the United States may conduct operations separately or jointly.**

When operations are undertaken with the forces of a single military service, the command arrangements for their control and direction are determined by that service. However, when the forces of two or more services are combined in a specific undertaking, that component whose forces are most capable of conducting decisive operations must have the primary role. The centralized control of the forces combined in that undertaking must be vested in its commander.

Command arrangements for such operations must be based upon a comprehension of the objectives and circumstances which are involved, upon an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the forces affected, and upon mutual confidence.

### **Proper command arrangements are essential in attaining unity of effort.**

The guiding principle for command arrangements is that control should always be placed at the level which is fully able to employ the capabilities of the forces which are involved.

Forces with missions which are limited in scope, and types of forces whose characteristics restrict them to operations in relatively limited areas, may operate effectively within a com-

mand system that reflects comparable limits. Other forces which are not thus limited, either by missions or capabilities, must be under the control and direction of appropriate higher authority so that their potentialities will be employed fully.

### **The most effective military forces are those which are products of a common philosophy of planning.**

The primary purpose of planning is to insure that the national resources available for the military instrument of policy at any time are used to provide the types of forces, and the quantities of forces, which will prove most effective in all aspects of international conflict. In the division of resources among forces of different types, the priorities must be established so as to insure allocations which provide the maximum return in military capabilities. The capabilities must be related to the forms of conflict and the threats projected by those forms of conflict, with emphasis in the allocation of resources being placed at all times on the provision of the means to meet the primary threat.

### **Military forces must be evaluated constantly.**

Constant evaluation of military forces must be conducted as a precaution against the wasteful use of national resources or costly errors of judgment, either of which might prejudice the welfare of the nation. The positive results of the evaluations must be reflected in the kinds of forces that are provided for the military instrument inbeing. The results must be re-

flected also in other forces which are authorized for future production and employment, and in the nature and priorities of research and development programs bearing on forces and weapons systems. These processes are necessary for the nation to produce forces which will meet the time, type, and quality requirements of the strategy.

An essential requirement for these necessary evaluations again is current and accurate information concerning those nations and peoples whose ideals, objectives, policies, and military capabilities are significant in relation to the continued security and welfare of the United States. As weapons systems acquire greater speed, range, firepower, and variety, the need for information indicating the intentions and capabilities of such nations and peoples becomes increasingly acute. Therefore, a nation must be prepared to accept great risks to obtain the necessary information when the risks of not having it are considered greater.

### **The military forces of the United States can perform their greatest and most economical service in any form of international conflict by providing circumstances in which the United States can exercise a compelling initiative in international affairs.**

When the initiative is held, the opportunities are at their best to gain and maintain security—by assisting the preservation of a felicitous peace, by averting threatened war under acceptable conditions, or, if necessary, by winning a decision in war.



## Section C

# CHARACTERISTICS OF AIR FORCES AND PRINCIPLES FOR THEIR EMPLOYMENT

### The predominant characteristics of air forces are:

*Range*—which accords them the capability to fly to any point on the globe and return to any desired location.

*Speed*—which is such that in the employment of modern air forces no two points on the earth's surface are more than a few hours apart.

*Mobility*—which is such that air forces can have an independent capability sufficient to establish themselves at new bases of operation on short notice.

*Flexibility*—which is such that air forces can be adapted quickly to various requirements for performance and firepower. They can be diverted rapidly from one type of operation to another at a given location. They can shift the performance of a designated task from one locality to another with a minimum of delay in operations. They provide a capability to deliver a variety of firepower ranging in form and force from bullets to hydrogen bombs. They can be employed to deliver ideas and cargo, as well as weapons. They can be used to procure information.

*Penetrative ability*—which accrues from the medium of space in which air forces operate, and from the relatively small size of air vehicles, their ability to fly at high speeds and selected altitudes, and their ability to employ a wide variety of tactics.

### Air forces exert a dynamic impact in all forms of international relations.

Operating in the medium of space, unrestricted by the definitive boundaries of land or sea, air forces are inherently capable of operating anywhere and at any time. This potential

exposes the entire structure of other nations—both the material and social components—to the influence of air operations. However, this inherent capability always is subject to limitations imposed by strategy, policy, or other circumstances.

The proper employment of air forces requires recognition of their versatility as a component of the military instrument of national policy.

### There are established principles for the successful employment of air forces.

Adherence to these principles has proved successful and disregarding them involves a high degree of risk and possible failure. They follow:

#### Air forces are an entity.

The medium in which air forces operate—space—is an indivisible field of activity. This medium, in combination with the characteristics of air vehicles, invests air forces with the great flexibility that is the basis of their strength. For this flexibility to be exploited fully, the air forces must be responsive at all levels of operation to employment as a single, aggregate instrument.

All command arrangements must be in accord with the precept that neither air forces nor their field of activity can be segmented and partitioned among different interests. Because air forces possess the inherent ability to concentrate effort at decisive times and places, they can be employed in a variety of tasks for the purpose of accomplishing a variety of effects. They can perform the tasks simultaneously or in rapid sequence, with all supporting a common objective. However, the versatility that makes this wide variety of em-

ployment possible also could lead to demands of a divisive nature which, if met, would have the effect of segmenting the forces concerned and diffusing their effort in unrelated, infeasible, or excessively costly undertakings. Under such employment the full advantages of flexibility would be lost, the unity of the air forces involved would be destroyed, and their strength would be dissipated in piecemeal effort.

Command arrangements at all levels must be adequate to preclude such wastage, which could be disastrous. In all air efforts—regardless of their nature or scope—segmentation must be avoided by centralizing control of the air forces that are allocated and employed. Control must be placed under an air commander at a level high enough to exploit the air forces fully toward attainment of the specific objective involved.

The purpose of centralized control is to provide a command capability for the employment of air forces as an entity, either on a global scale or on a lesser scale—but to provide the capability in each instance for employment of the air forces involved as a single instrument.

### Air forces are employed for the attainment of a common objective.

The selection of the objective and adherence to it is another of the established principles for the successful employment of air forces. The objective must be defined in terms of the conditions that are desired as a result of the operations in question. The strategy to accomplish the objective must be as simple and as direct as possible. Every plan must be tested constantly for the extent to which it facilitates attainment of the overall objective. All levels of command must be certain that their expenditure of effort contributes directly to the common objective.

### The initiative must be exercised to the greatest possible extent.

By their versatility air forces provide the means of exercising the initiative in many different conditions of international relations. Regardless of the type of conflict involved, it is essential to take advantage of different opportunities as they occur, and also to create opportunities for the utilization of air forces. The principle that the initiative must be exercised

to the greatest degree possible applies to all air operations.

In wartime operations the initiative must be manifested in the offense, for victory is not possible without offensive action. Air forces alone have the power to carry out operations immediately against an enemy at any desired point in time or space. Therefore, they must be employed on the offense at the very outset of hostilities.

### Air forces must exploit the principle of surprise whenever appropriate.

Surprise may be exploited to attain both military and psychological advantages. It can be achieved through speed, deception, audacity, originality, and concentration. In air operations, it is a powerful determinant and every effort must be made to attain it. The results which are gained through surprise may be out of all proportion to the effort expended.

### Air effort must be properly concentrated.

The dominant characteristics of air forces coupled with the continuity of the medium of space lead to the ability to concentrate effort in both time and space. Air vehicles and new weapons have provided air forces with the ability to concentrate enormous decisive striking power upon selected targets. This ability is available to provide the optimum amount of effort to accomplish a required task anywhere on the globe. Because of the facility with which concentration can be accomplished, care must be exercised to avoid application of surplus effort which would be a needless dissipation of resources, and may under certain circumstances lead to negative effects. Conversely, time, forces, and opportunity may be wasted if, because of vacillating pressure, the effort falls short of its goal by even a relatively small margin. Therefore, employment of air forces must be undertaken with the expectation of sustaining the operation until the desired effect is accomplished.

### Security is a constant consideration.

Measures to maintain or strengthen the security of available forces against all forms of action which would reduce, neutralize, or destroy their capabilities are necessarily continuous. Appraisal of the nature, extent, and urgency of conditions which threaten the security of the



forces must be made regularly upon the basis of the most timely, reliable, and complete intelligence information that can be obtained.

**Air operations must be carefully coordinated through proper control.**

In its broadest sense, this principle includes the cooperation necessary for mutual confidence

among the components of the military instrument of policy, and between the military and civilian components of government. Control consists of an organization of command that clearly assigns responsibility, establishes authority commensurate therewith, and insures the prompt transmission of such assignments.

**Section D**

**EMPLOYMENT OF AIR FORCES IN PEACE AND WAR**

**United States air forces are employed to gain and exploit a dominant position in the air both in peace and in war.**

The desired dominant position is control of the air. Control of the air is achieved when air forces, in peace or in war, can effect the desired degrees of influence over other specific nations. Control of the air is gained and held by the appropriate employment of the nation's air potential. It can be exploited continuously through a resultant ability to exert desired influence on the actions or attitudes of a nation or nations in peace or in war.

Sometimes a dominant position can be attained through the mere presence and passive use of air forces. At other times control of the air may require the active use of air forces to attain the desired dominant position. There will be occasions when a combination of "passive-type dominance" and "active-type dominance" may serve best in support of the national objectives.

The passive use of air forces generally is confined to circumstances short of armed conflict. The potential of this use of air forces must not be underestimated as allies, adversaries, and neutrals are subject to profound effects. These effects may be either in the nature of an incentive or in the nature of a deterrent. They may occur in forms that are political, economic, military, or psycho-social. They may be manifested, identified, and exploited in all types and gradations of conflict between nations.

A nation's influence in international negotiations is strengthened or weakened by the state of its air forces. The capabilities of powerful air forces for achieving decision in major war are thus translated into a capacity for the maintenance of world peace.

**The striking capacity of enemy air forces must be minimized as a primary consideration in war.**

If war is forced upon the United States, its air forces must be initially committed to the extent required to eliminate or reduce the enemy's air threat. Because of the decisive potential of air weapons, the survival of the nation in total war demands that a favorable decision must be attained against an enemy's long range air forces. In all forms of hostilities (total war or limited war) action must be taken to minimize the striking power of other air forces of the enemy which threaten the success of friendly operations by action against the friendly forces concerned.

In military air operations, the attacker holds decided advantages over the defender. The attacker is able to exercise the initiative as to time, place, strength, and method of attack. The defender is forced to prepare for all eventualities. Because of the advantages held by air forces employed offensively—and further because air forces are most vulnerable while on the ground—one of the fundamental means of providing security from air attack is through destruction of an enemy's air forces while they are on their bases. This principle holds true regardless of whether the bases in question are the enemy's homeland bases or are bases elsewhere which are being used by deployed portions of the enemy's air forces.

**Air defense forces in-being are indispensable to national security.**

For a nation such as the United States, having a highly organized industrial society and many great population centers, the implications of a surprise air attack by an aggressor having weapons of devastating power are critical. Air forces provide forces and measures



for air security to assist in preserving the Nation's vital resources.

In war the primary objective of air defense is to insure national survival. However, purely defensive measures have limitations which make them incapable of insuring immunity from air attack. The military policy for the security of the United States recognizes that in the event of war air defense measures coupled with strong air counterblows against the sources of the enemy's strength will provide the best security.

**In war, a dominant position in the air enhances the security of all types of military forces.**

When air forces win a dominant position in wartime operations and thus establish conditions for control of the air, other types of forces may exploit the advantages as their individual capabilities permit. Control of the air that is provided in such cases is a relative condition, and the advantages will vary for air forces, ground forces, and sea forces. The commanders concerned in each instance must analyze the opportunities that such employment of air forces affords to them and exploit them according to the capabilities and limitations of their own force.

**Control of the air can affect the fundamental elements of an object nation's strength.**

The manner in which air forces are employed will depend primarily upon the following factors: (1) the status of the object nation (allied, enemy, or neutral); (2) the nature of the specific result that is desired; (3) the timing of the operations which are undertaken (during war or during forms of conflict not involving war). So, the employment of air forces may at any time individually affect an object nation's political, economic, military, or social structure, or it may affect all of them.

The basic decisions as to the selection of any type of objective for the employment of air forces require a continuity of information about the object nation. These decisions can be made only after available intelligence information has been examined. Depending upon the timing of the operations and the state of relations between the nations involved, these considerations may include information of the

object nation such as: public and political attitudes; economic conditions; weapons systems; research and development activities; the ability to convert from civilian enterprise to war effort; the flow of material from neutral countries; the attitudes of satellites or treaty allies; the extent of strategic stockpiles; the capacity for recuperability; the availability and capability of military forces. The absence of comprehensive information in categories such as these will impose false limitations upon air forces, and will act to compromise opportunities to exploit control of the air.

**Air forces have the capability to conduct wartime operations directly against all components of an enemy's strength.**

The components include military forces and their installations and facilities, the organizations and systems for civil enterprise and control—including major cities—and populations, in which rest the national ability and will to conduct war. However, the provision by the United States of air capabilities sufficient for attacks upon all of these components never implies that attacks upon all of them are indispensable to success. The essentially basic determinant of the success of air operations is not the weight of effort involved, or the extent of destruction that is imposed upon an enemy and its people. It is the extent to which the operations contribute to attainment of the condition which the government considers to be necessary for the war to be concluded successfully. Mass destruction is only one of many effects possible in air operations.

**Air operations are mutually supporting.**

Modern implements of war and the nature of international conflict require global air planning. Air operations of all types are integral parts of the same common strategy. So, all air operations are interrelated. Air forces of all types are interdependent in terms of the effects which they can produce. They must be employed accordingly.

**Air operations may be conducted within an enemy's sovereign territory, or in peripheral localities, or in segregated areas.**

Air forces, by virtue of their capability to penetrate to the central sources of an enemy

nation's strength, may be employed against selected objectives to reduce the enemy's will and capacity to resist or to pursue a war objective. Air operations also can be conducted to neutralize aspects of power that radiate outward from an object nation's central sources to peripheral localities, satellite states, or to segregated or proxy areas of conflict. Also, air forces, if necessary, can conduct specialized operations in warfare that is limited by geographic or political boundaries, in which they need not penetrate a major opponent's sovereign territory to achieve acceptable results. The effects of air operations in any of these conditions can be of decisive proportions.

**Air effort must be allocated carefully among the various types of operations.**

The proportion of effort to be devoted to operations of any specific type, in any specific locality, and at any specific time must be determined judiciously. The requirements of the overall objective exercise the predominant influence in decisions.

As conditions change, the strategic importance of the many elements that make up an object nation's strength will alter. So, the priorities accorded to the various elements as air objectives will change. Air forces must be employed to counter the forces or conditions

which pose the greatest and most immediate threats. Considering the implications of modern conflict, this priority employment is dictated by survival.

**Air forces must be employed consistently to obtain information.**

Air reconnaissance is one of the major sources of information requisite to successful military operations. When data obtainable through air reconnaissance, mapping and charting operations, and specialized undertakings, is correlated with information from other sources, a comprehensive catalogue of knowledge is accumulated. This knowledge will supply indications of courses of action which other nations will pursue, and their capabilities for such undertakings.

**Adequate logistics is essential to effective employment of air capabilities.**

Logistics provide the means for the conduct of air operations. Encompassed by logistics are the tasks for determining support requirements, procurement and maintenance, and distribution. The importance of logistics is such that it often may be the difference between success and failure in an undertaking. So, there must be close and constant coordination in all types of planning.



## Section E

# AIR POWER AND NATIONAL SECURITY

### **The term "air power" embraces the entire aviation capacity of the United States.**

Active military forces, reserve air forces and their supporting facilities comprise a major component of air power. Total air power also includes the entire civil aviation enterprise; the whole system for research, development, and production; and the trained personnel, military and civilian, in both an active and reserve capacity. These resources together with a national understanding of air power, are the Nation's air strength.

### **Air power has radically changed the conduct of war.**

War has been characterized in the past by a general pattern of events in which military forces were engaged in an extended struggle of attrition in surface battles. With air forces and modern weapons systems available, it no longer is necessary to defeat opposing armed forces as a prerequisite to conducting major operations directly against an opponent either in his sovereign territory or in any other locality. Measured in terms of destruction, war may become more sudden and total.

### **Air power also has radically changed the basic conditions of security.**

Because of national vulnerabilities consistent security demands military programs which

reflect appraisals on the basis of national survival and ultimate success. The conventional buildup phase subsequent to the initiation of hostilities and preparatory to taking the offensive may no longer be necessary, and, in any event, can no longer be insured. Immediate, effective reaction to threats to national security in all forms of international conflict is a matter of primary importance. Forces in-being must be provided and maintained for this purpose. The speed with which the forces can execute the required tasks may well determine the course of conflict.

### **Adequate forces for air operations are essential to security.**

Of the various types of military forces, those which conduct air operations are most capable of decisive results. This preeminence accrues to them because of their versatility—with or without armed conflict—and because their capabilities permit them to be employed wherever necessary. They provide the dominant military means of exercising the initiative and gaining decisions in all forms of international relations, including full peace, cold war, limited wars of all types, and total war.

### **The paramount consideration for the security and well being of the United States is the timely provision of adequate air power.**







